

Some tips for making a complaint

What to do if you want to make a complaint



NSW Ombudsman

Some tips for making a complaint

You should make a complaint directly to the agency, providing them the opportunity to address your concerns. Most agencies have a process to manage complaints.

Your contact may bring a broader problem to the attention of the agency, which may result in changes to their policies or procedures that will benefit other members of the community.

Websites are a great source of information. An agencies website will usually have the address of who to write to and how to make a complaint about their service.

We believe that complaints are one of the best sources of feedback on how an agency is performing. This is why we encourage and help agencies to have effective complaint handling systems so that they can better handle complaints about themselves and use the feedback to improve the way they do things.

Note: For the purpose of this brochure organisations are referred to as agencies.

A letter is best, but a phone call may resolve the matter quickly

A written letter of complaint is best, particularly if you are dealing with a large agency. When a letter is received, it is directed to the right area or person.

However, an initial phone call may help clarify some of the issues, or may help you understand the agencies complaint handling procedure. For example, some complaints may require a special form or a statutory declaration. Phoning is also better if dealing with a telephone service supplier.

When making contact by phone, it is best to talk to the person who deals with your type of complaint, as the matter could be resolved immediately. Tell them about your complaint, ask them if they can help and what they intend to do. Always ask for their name and position, keep notes of what was said, as well as the time and date of your phone call.

Phone complaints can be frustrating. You are not always able to speak to the person directly responsible and calls don't get returned. If nothing happens, it is then difficult to prove that you complained in the first place. If there is any doubt about whether your concerns have been properly addressed, write a letter. Even if you are satisfied, it may be best to confirm your understanding of your phone conversation in writing.

What to include in your letter

Summarise in a couple of sentences exactly what your complaint is. Your letter should be clear and to the point, set out in a logical order and include:

- 1.** Print your name clearly at the end of the letter and sign. If you cannot sign your name, another person can sign on your behalf.
- 2.** Make sure your address and contact details are clearly written.
- 3.** Ensure the name of the agency is in the address.
- 4.** Always put the date on your letter.
- 5.** Identify what the complaint is about at the start of the letter eg. Complaint about (name of agency and issue).
- 6.** State clearly what your complaint is about – include relevant dates and times, description of incidents, any explanations you think important.
- 7.** Include any evidence there is to support your claim.
- 8.** If police officers are involved, provide the ID number of the officers.
- 9.** If you have complained to another agency or taken any other action (include details).
- 10.** Say what you think should be done about your complaint.
- 11.** Give a date by which you expect to get a reply in writing (be realistic).
- 12.** Attach copies of all relevant documents eg. medical evidence, photographs etc.

Address your letter to the person responsible

Address your complaint to the person at the agency who is responsible for the area that you are having trouble with, or to the complaint handling officer (if there is one). If you are unable to identify these people, write to the head of the agency. Make it clear in your letter that you consider them responsible for the problem and that they must address your concerns. Your letter should be firm but polite.

Complaining online

Many agencies now have an online complaint form on their website. Some of these forms include information that may assist in directing you to the correct agency to deal with your complaint, and may also provide contact details or links to that agency.

Tell them what you need

Tell the agency what action you want to happen for your complaint to be resolved. Be polite and respectful, try and separate your feelings from the issue. Communicating in an angry way could cause offence or defensiveness, and may get in the way of good outcomes, rather than properly address your concerns.

Make sure your demands are not unreasonable. If your request is realistic and within the power of the person you are writing to, you are more likely to resolve your complaint.

You can also ask for details of how they handle complaints, which might help.

Ask for action

Always request that your letter or phone call be acknowledged in writing. Ask the agency for an estimate of how long it will take to deal with your complaint. If there is a degree of urgency involved, let them know and explain why.

Tell them what you will do if the complaint is not resolved

It may be appropriate to tell the person or agency that if the complaint is not resolved, you will complain to someone else. This may be someone higher in the agency or an outside body like your local Member of Parliament, the responsible Minister, the Ombudsman or another complaint handling or appeal body.

Keep records

It is important that you keep copies of all letters you send and receive as well as details of all phone calls. You may need to provide evidence of your dealings with the agency, particularly if you decide to refer the matter to another agency.

Be persistent

If nothing happens, phone the agency to check on the progress of your complaint. If they are not able to provide you with an update, write again. Make it clear to the person you speak or write to that the problem will not go away unless it is resolved.

What to do if unsuccessful

If your complaint is not properly resolved, or is not dealt with in a reasonable time, you may want to take it to another agency. The following pages set out the names and addresses of various agencies that deal with complaints. For your ease, we have grouped these agencies according to industry or subject matter.

Contacts list

| | |
|--|----|
| Discrimination, disability or harassment..... | 6 |
| Employment..... | 7 |
| Energy and Water | 8 |
| Freedom of Information | 9 |
| Financial | 9 |
| Government departments | 10 |
| Health | 11 |
| Legal..... | 12 |
| Media..... | 13 |
| Police..... | 14 |
| Privacy..... | 14 |
| Real estate agents or landlords and builders | 15 |
| Telecommunications | 15 |

Discrimination, disability or harassment

Anti-Discrimination Board

Level 4, 175 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9268 5555
Toll free: 1800 670 812
TTY: (02) 9268 5522
Fax: (02) 9268 5500
Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

Australian Human Rights Commission

Level 8, 133 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9284 9600
1300 369 711 switch
1300 656 419 complaints
TTY: 1800 620 241
Fax: (02) 9284 9611
Web: www.hreoc.gov.au
Email: complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au

Australian National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Reporting or complaining about abuse or neglect of a person with a disability at home, in the community, or in any location.

Locked Bag 2705
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Toll free: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130
NRS: 1800 555 677
TIS: 131 450
Web: www.disabilityhotline.org

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)

Australian Government-funded disability employment and advocacy services.

Locked Bag 2705
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Phone: (02) 9370 3174
Free call: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130
NRS: 1800 555 677
Fax: (02) 9318 1372
Web: www.crrs.org.au
Email: crrs@pwd.org.au

Employment

Intellectual Disability Rights Service

Community legal centre specialising in legal and rights issues.

2C/199 Regent Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

PO Box 3347
REDFERN NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9318 0144

Free call: 1800 666 611

Helpline: 1300 665 908

Fax: (02) 9318 2887

Web: www.idrs.org.au

Email: info@idrs.org.au

People with Disability Australia Incorporated

To make a complaint about their rights being infringed.

52 Pitt Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

PO Box 666
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Phone: (02) 9370 3100

Toll free: 1800 422 015

TTY: (02) 9318 2138
1800 422 016

Fax: (02) 9318 1372

Web: www.pwd.org.au

Email: pwd@pwd.org.au

Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal

Hears and determines appeals against decisions relating to the discipline and promotion of NSW public sector employees.

47 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9020 4750

Fax: (02) 9020 4790

Web: www.great.greattab.nsw.gov.au

NSW Industrial Relations

McKell Building
2–24 Rawson Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: 131 628

TTY: 1800 555 677

Fax: (02) 9020 4700

Web: www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au

Transport Appeal Boards

For promotion and disciplinary matters for public sector transport authorities employees.

See *Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal*.

Energy and Water

WorkCover NSW

For occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation information.

92–100 Donnison Street
GOSFORD NSW 2250

Locked Bag 2906
LISAROW NSW 2252

Phone: (02) 4321 5000

Info

Centre: 131 050

Fax: (02) 4325 4145

Web: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Email: complimentsandcomplaints@workcover.nsw.gov.au

Energy and Water Ombudsman

Level 10, 323 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Reply Paid K1343
HAYMARKET NSW 1239

Free call: 1800 246 545

NRS: 133 677

TIS: 131 450

Free fax: 1800 812 291

Web: www.ewon.com.au

Email: omb@ewon.com.au

Freedom of Information

Your complaint should be made to the FOI Officer at the authority concerned.

Administrative Decisions Tribunal

Reviews administrative decisions regarding FOI, adoption, community and disability services, hearing complaints of discrimination, vilification, harassment and victimisation, certain types of professional misconduct cases against solicitors or barristers and retail lease claims.

Level 15, 111 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

DX 1523 Sydney

Phone: (02) 9223 4677
TTY: (02) 9235 2674
Fax: (02) 9233 3283

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adt
Email: ag_adt@agd.nsw.gov.au

Financial

Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS)

FOS's independent dispute resolution processes covers financial services disputes including banking, credit, loans, general insurance, life insurance, financial planning, investments, stock broking, managed funds and pooled superannuation trusts.

GPO Box 3
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Phone: (03) 9613 7366
Toll free: 1300 780 808
Fax: (03) 9613 6399

Web: www.fos.org.au
Email: info@fos.org.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman

See *Government departments*.

NSW Ombudsman

See *back of brochure*.

Government departments

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Level 7, North Wing, Sydney Central
477 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box K825
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

Toll free: 1300 362 072
Fax: (02) 9211 4402

Web: www.ombudsman.gov.au
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Local Government

Level 2, 5 O'Keefe Avenue
NOWRA NSW 2541

Locked Bag 3015
NOWRA NSW 2541

Phone: (02) 4428 4100
TTY: (02) 4428 4209
Fax: (02) 4428 4199

Web: www.dlg.nsw.gov.au
Email: dlg@dlg.nsw.gov.au

Community Services

4–6 Cavill Avenue
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Locked Bag 4028
ASHFIELD NSW 2131

Phone: (02) 9716 2222
Free call: 1800 000 164
Help line: 132 111
Fax: (02) 9717 2999
Web: www.community.nsw.gov.au

Independent Commission Against Corruption

Level 21, 133 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 500
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 8281 5999
Toll free: 1800 463 909
TTY: (02) 8281 5773
Fax: (02) 9264 5364
Web: www.icac.nsw.gov.au
Email: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au

Health

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

Looks after the interests of children and young people in NSW. Coordinates employment screening for child related employment.

Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Phone: (02) 9286 7276
TTY: (02) 9286 7286
Fax: (02) 9286 7267
Web: www.kids.nsw.gov.au
Email: kids@kids.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

See back of brochure.

Members of Parliament

Your Federal Member of Parliament

See *Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices* in the telephone directory.

Web: www.aph.gov.au

Your State Member of Parliament

See *Parliament of NSW* in the telephone directory.

Web: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au

Health Care Complaints Commission

Doctors, other health care providers, hospitals or health services.

Level 13, 323 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Locked Bag 18
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

DX 11617 SYDNEY DOWNTOWN

Phone: (02) 9219 7444
Toll free: 1800 043 159
TTY: (02) 9219 7555
Fax: (02) 9281 4585

Web: www.hccc.nsw.gov.au
Email: hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au

Private Health Insurance Ombudsman

Level 7, 362 Kent Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 8235 8777
Free call: 1800 640 695
NRS: 132 544
TIS: 131 450
Fax: (02) 8235 8778

Web: www.phio.org.au
Email: info@phio.org.au

Lawyers and Solicitors

Office of the Legal Services Commissioner

Phone the inquiry line for advice before
submitting a written complaint.

Level 9, 75 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 4460
SYDNEY NSW 2001

DX 359 Sydney

Phone: (02) 9377 1800

Free call: 1800 242 958

TTY: (02) 9377 1855

Fax: (02) 9377 1888

Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/olsc

Email: olsc@agd.nsw.gov.au

State Court Judges, Magistrates or Judicial Officers

Judicial Commission of NSW

Level 5, 301 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 3634
SYDNEY NSW 2001

DX 886 Sydney

Phone: (02) 9299 4421

Fax: (02) 9290 3194

Web: www.judcom.nsw.gov.au

Email: judcom@judcom.nsw.gov.au

Media

Print Media

Australian Press Council

For articles or editorial in the print media.

Suite 10.02
117 York Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9261 1930
Toll free: 1800 025 712
Fax: (02) 9267 6826
Web: www.presscouncil.org.au
Email: info@presscouncil.org.au
complaints@presscouncil.org.au

Television and Radio

Australian Communications and Media Authority

For unresolved complaints and breaches of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

Level 15, Tower 1, Darling park

201 Sussex Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

PO Box Q500
Queen Victoria Building
NSW 1230

Phone: (02) 9334 7700
Toll free: 1800 226 667
Fax: (02) 9334 7799
Web: www.acma.gov.au

ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs

For ABC television or radio.

GPO Box 9994
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 139 994
TTY: 1800 627 854
Web: www.abc.net.au

Independent Complaints Review Panel

For complaints related to serious bias, lack of balance or unfair treatment in an ABC broadcast.

GPO Box 688
SYDNEY NSW 1585
Web: www.abc.net.au

Special Broadcasting Service

For SBS television or radio.

14 Herbert Street
ARTARMON NSW 2064

Locked Bag 028
CROWS NEST NSW 1585
Toll free: 1800 500 727
Web: www.sbs.com.au
Email: comments@sbs.com.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman

For complaints about Federal Police.
See *Government departments*.

NSW Ombudsman

See *back of brochure*.

Police Integrity Commission

For complaints about serious police corruption and misconduct.

Level 3, 111 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

GPO Box 3880
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: (02) 9321 6700
Free call: 1800 657 079
Fax: (02) 9321 6799
Web: www.pic.nsw.gov.au
Email: contactus@pic.nsw.gov.au

Federal Privacy Commissioner

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 1300 363 992
TTY: 1800 620 241
Fax: (02) 9284 9666
Web: www.privacy.gov.au
Email: privacy@privacy.gov.au

Privacy NSW

160 Marsden Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Locked Bag 5111
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Phone: (02) 8688 8585
Fax: (02) 8688 9660
Web: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/privacynsw
Email: privacy_nsw@agd.nsw.gov.au

Real estate agents or landlords and builders

NSW Fair Trading

1 Fitzwilliam Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150
PO Box 972
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Phone: (02) 9895 0111
Enquiries: 133 220
TTY: 1300 723 404
Fax: (02) 9895 0222
Web: www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au
Email: enquiry@oft.commerce.nsw.gov.au

Advisory centres at Albury, Armidale, Blacktown, Bathurst, Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Gosford, Goulburn, Grafton, Hurstville, Lismore, Liverpool, Newcastle, Orange, Parramatta, Penrith, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Tamworth, Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

PO Box 276
Collins Street West
MELBOURNE VIC 8007

Phone: (03) 8600 8700
Free call: 1800 062 058
TTY: 1800 675 692
NRS: 1800 555 677
TIS: 131 450
Free fax: 1800 630 614
Web: www.tio.com.au
Email: tio@tio.com.au

Contact details

Level 24, 580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

If you wish to visit us, we prefer you make an appointment.
Please call us first to ensure your complaint is within our
jurisdiction and our staff are available to see you.

Our business hours are:
Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm
(Inquiries section closes at 4pm)

Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS): 131 450
We can arrange an interpreter through TIS
or you can contact TIS yourself before speaking to us.

General inquiries: 02 9286 1000

Toll free (outside Sydney metro): 1800 451 524

Tel. typewriter (TTY): 02 9264 8050

Facsimile: 02 9283 2911

Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

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